

HARVY ALLEN.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 519.]

MARCH 30, 1860.

Mr. GREEN ADAMS, from the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred the memorial of Harvey Allen, of Wisconsin, make the following report:

That the memorialist invented a water-proof and air-tight mail-bag, which he exhibited to the Postmaster General in the spring of 1852, and asked to have it introduced into the public service. Mr. Hall, then Postmaster General, referred the subject to Mr. W. A. Bradley, then postmaster at Washington city, who reported that from the experiments he had witnessed with this bag, it was an improvement on the bags used in the public service, and recommended their introduction on the California routes. Mr. Bradley testifies that he distinctly recollects that he examined the subject by request of the Postmaster General, Hall, and afterwards furnished an estimate to Mr. Allen of the number and size of the bags required on the California routes, at the request of Mr. Hall, who in a few days thereafter retired from the department and was succeeded by Mr. Hubbard. Mr. Bradley says he supposed from what he remembers that Mr. Allen had received orders from the department to manufacture the number of bags required for the California service, and had received "the reward due to his ingenuity." When referred to afterwards, Mr. Hall only recollects agreeing to test the utility of Allen's mail bags on the California route, but is quite clear that he DID NOT enter on any contract with him which justified large expenditures, relying upon reimbursements from the department. After Mr. Hubbard came into office, he said the article was much needed, and he would secure enough to test them, and if they proved satisfactory he would adopt them on the mail route to California. It seems that under these assurances, as Mr. Allen understood them, he (Allen) went on to manufacture a quantity of his mail-bags of the size adapted to the California service, and to prepare himself for the manufacture of the article on an extensive scale. Something like four thousand were estimated to be necessary for said service, according to the understanding of the memorialist, and he had prepared to enter at once on the preparation of this quantity, by building a rolling-mill to roll the steel for the clasps and

locks of the bags, and to procure material and tools, all of which cost him some \$15,000, according to his estimate.

After Mr. Campbell succeeded Mr. Hubbard as Postmaster General, Mr. Allen brought to the department about two hundred of the bags *finished*, but Mr. Campbell refused to ratify the contract attributed to Hall and Hubbard, or to take any of the mail-bags from Allen, or to make him compensation therefor, but broke up prior engagements by his predecessors with Mr. Allen, and left him, with all his fixtures and materials, finished and unfinished, on hand, to make such disposition thereof as he could.

Under this state of the case the memorialist applied to the 34th Congress for redress, and a bill was reported for his relief, directing the Postmaster General to contract with him for five thousand of these mail-bags, provided he would release his claim for damages by reason of the violation of his alleged contract with the Post Office Department. This bill was left amongst the unfinished business of that Congress. The memorialist avers that under this blow from the department he suffered a prostration of credit, and was compelled to sacrifice property upon a falling market, which, together with a loss of health, has reduced him from affluence to poverty. Pretermittting his application to the 35th Congress because of bad health, Mr. Allen now comes and renews his prayer for redress, asking, if he shall be cut off from his just claim for damages, that the number of bags he shall be allowed to manufacture may be increased to twenty thousand instead of five thousand.

This committee readily understand that if Mr. Allen was entitled to damages by reason of the failure of Mr. Campbell, the Postmaster General, to comply with the former engagements of his predecessor or predecessors, those damages would not only amount to the cost of the article which was thrown upon his hands useless, but for such additional sacrifice as he may have been compelled to sustain by having his property sacrificed under forced sales, by reason of the disappointment to which he was subjected by the action of the public agents of the United States. But the committee deem it useless to pursue this inquiry, as they place their action on another basis. The memorialist has submitted ample proof that his mail-bags are an improvement in many respects upon those now employed in the public service, and he has the recommendation of a number of contractors for carrying the mails, who think the article could be very advantageously introduced nearly everywhere into the mail service of the country. The sacrifice to which the memorialist has been subjected, as well as the high merits of his invention, give him just claims upon the attention of Congress, and as he proposes to waive all claim to damages from his past disappointments and hopes, the committee consider it would be but right to give him a contract which will enable him to reëngage in the manufacture of the mail-bags, especially as the quantity he asks will not amount to more than one-fifth of the quantity required for the wants of the Post Office Department. They ask to report a bill allowing said Allen to make five thousand mail-bags, it being the same number recommended by the committee of the 34th Congress of the United States in said case.